

City Council of the Mayor and Council of New Castle
Special Council Meeting and Workshop
Town Hall– 201 Delaware Street – New Castle
Tuesday – March 20, 2012 – 5:30 p.m.

Present:

Council President William Barthel
Councilperson John Cochran
Councilperson John Gaworski
Councilperson Ted Megginson
Councilperson Teel Petty

Also present: Treasurer Janet Carlin, Administrator Cathryn Thomas, Finance Director Marian Delaney, Police Chief Kevin McDerby, Solicitor Daniel Losco

1. Motion, Discussion and Vote on Resolution No. 2012-9, urging the Bond Bill Committee and the General Assembly to include funding in the 2012-13 State Budget for reconstruction of dikes in the City of New Castle.

President Barthel said that at the last meeting there was a discussion about a resolution in support of the dikes.

Councilperson Megginson made a motion to approve the resolution. Councilperson Gaworski seconded the motion.

President Barthel read the resolution. He said the City did ask for a \$120,000 in funds for the engineering and study of the pier. The City wanted to make sure that was running in parallel of, not instead of, what the City is trying to do on the dikes.

The resolution passed unanimously.

2. Mid-Year Budget Review

Finance Director Delaney went down the revenue side of the budget. She said the City is doing well in terms of property tax revenues with \$2.8 million, at the end of February. Last year the City had \$2,897,000 for the whole year. This year the City anticipated \$2.9 million for the full year. Property tax transfers are really far down.

A discussion was held on property tax transfer amounts and how the City has lowered its expectations considerably each of the past few years.

Finance Director Delaney said business licenses have been doing well. The rental line is low. Building permits had been lowered in the budget.

The City is likely to hit the budget amount or go over on business permits.

Ms. Delaney said the Code Enforcement reimbursement line up. Administrator Thomas said the biggest revenue gap the City is facing is property tax transfers where there is a \$90,000 gap.

Ms. Delaney said State fines are at a little more than half. Summer Recreation revenues will start coming in in June. The AT&T revenues are already over what was budgeted. MSC will be giving the City by the end of June the remainder of the \$500,000 for the full year. A discussion focused on the budgeting for ARRA Green Project Stormwater Pond.

Administrator Thomas said on the expense side the City is being affected by the increasing price of fuel.

Chief McDerby said the seasonal bike patrol always spans two fiscal years because it starts before the end of the fiscal year in June.

Administrator Thomas said the City Solicitor's budget is over the budget amount now with a few months left in the fiscal year. It is a product of the amount of work being assigned to him. Council during budget time will need to consider whether to budget \$40,000 a year or if makes more sense to budget more than that. Some of the big items the Solicitor has worked on are finished but other things seem to come up.

Ms. Delaney said on the plus side the City had not budgeted the \$10,000 reimbursement for the bike patrol from the Trustees. Also the City did not replace the HR person until recently, and with two part-timers rather than a full-timer, saved \$49,000 on the budget.

President Barthel asked if Council could begin looking at next year's budget earlier than in the past.

Ms. Delaney said she brought calendars for May and June to schedule some meetings. There were eight meetings last year.

Discussion was held on future meetings. A Special Meeting was scheduled for April 3 for an executive session to go over the upcoming AFSCME contract negotiations. The Council will have a meeting at 6 p.m. April 17 for the Budget Workshop. They will have three meetings in May 15, 22 and 29, subject to confirmation.

3. Motion, Discussion and Vote on Resolution No. 2012-10, to approve budgetary transfers, as appropriate and identified in the Mid-Year Budget Review process.

Councilperson Cochran made a motion to approve the resolution. Councilperson Gaworski seconded the motion.

President Barthel read the resolution.

The resolution passed unanimously.

Administrator Thomas said the City is in much better shape than many municipalities, which are struggling. Much of that is due to the budget and finances being managed well in recent years. The City has means available in terms of savings if it needs to use them this year. The City is struggling with the increasing cost of fuel. Fortunately the City had a light winter because it saved some money there.

4. Motion, Discussion and Vote on Resolution No. 2012-11, considering approval for the Police Department to engage in the process to hire a new employee to replace an officer who has retired.

Chief McDerby said March 19, 2012, is Zack Bascelli's last day with the Police Department. He has been injured and not on patrol. The Chief is looking to bring on board another officer to get back to full strength. As a corporal Zack Bascelli was making \$57,348 a year. The replacement officer would be \$46,946. Also the new officer coming on board would contribute 30 percent of health care, according to the most recent contract. Chief McDerby recommended hiring back former officer Paul Allston. He explained details of the situation behind that officer leaving the department. The timing requires the hiring by April 23 or the former officer would need to go back to the academy.

Councilperson Megginson made a motion to approve the resolution. Councilperson Gaworski seconded the motion. The hiring will be made no sooner than April 16.

President Barthel read the resolution.

The motion passed unanimously.

Chief McDerby asked Council for permission to spend funds from his budget not to exceed \$500 for a luncheon for Zack Bascelli.

Chief McDerby said the letter of the police contract is that for officers with less than 10 years they do not get reimbursed for accumulated sick leave. He said that was intended for people who come to the City for a few years and move on, not anticipated for people who are injured on the job. Zack Bascelli is not eligible for what would be roughly \$5,000. He is not leaving because he wants to leave.

Councilperson Cochran said his concern is it will set a precedent.

Administrator Thomas recommended that Council, if it wants to consider granting that, that it states it is a one time, unique circumstance and it sets no precedent. And Council is under no obligation to do it again. And only do it if the union agrees to that stipulation.

Solicitor Losco said the administrator's advice is good, but added that it is likely in the next contract negotiation the union will be insisting upon it. Having done it once, the City would be hard pressed to not do it under similar circumstances.

Chief McDerby said nobody in the history of the New Castle Police Department has previously gone out on disability pension.

Councilperson Cochran said he is concerned it will open a can of worms in the future.

A discussion was held about future negotiations and this matter.

Administrator Thomas said there is money set aside to cover benefits for employees who leave to pay for their sick time, etc.

The consensus of the board was to pay the money subject to the conditions regarding the union agreeing to the one time-event language.

There was a brief discussion on the seasonal bicycle officers. Council will address that at a future meeting. The City has not heard back from the Trustees yet regarding funding.

5. Discussion Concerning Police Vehicles

Chief McDerby said his focus will be on the administrative vehicles for next year's budget.

This matter will be addressed once the City has gotten information back regarding funding from the Trustees.

Councilperson Cochran made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Councilperson Petty seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 6:57 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Dickinson
New Castle City Clerk